

## **Testimony for the Appropriations Committee**

**February 24, 2022**

My name is Penelope Barsch and I am from Meriden. I am testifying on the Governor's proposed budget H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 that unfortunately does not include critical funding for our safety net providers and their employees.

After decades of underfunding, Connecticut's direct support providers are in crisis mode because the effects of the pandemic have impacted their ability to attract and retain direct care workers and other employees. This staff is critically important to the safety and well-being of many of Connecticut's residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), including my own family.

The wonderful group home my son resides in has significant staff shortages. My son requires full care. He is a large man with cerebral palsy. He uses a lift to get in and out of bed but needs complete help for dressing and undressing. He is unable to help in any way and attempting to turn him, pull clothing over his upper body and into his sleeves is physically challenging for caregivers as well as pulling up pants and putting on compression stockings. He has a colostomy bag which needs changing daily along with appliance that holds the bag being changed every 4 days. He needs to be positioned correctly in his wheelchair so his spinal curvature does not progress. He needs to be shaved every day and have assistance with toothbrushing and flossing. He has many medical appointments which require time and paperwork. The manager at his home fills in for open overnight and weekend shifts due to lack of staffing. A person who provides all the care my son and his peers require cannot live on the wages that are currently funded. I have said this before. Go into his home and see what is expected of staff to care for my son safely and with kindness. Until you witness what these caregivers are expected to do during a shift and often extra hours after their shift due to staffing issues, it would be clear that funding for compensation is inadequate and disrespectful. Please ensure the funding is appropriated to protect and provide for Connecticut citizens such as my beloved son.

Now more than ever, we need to ensure that critically necessary funding of \$150 million is included in this year's budget for the state's non-profit providers who care for our loved ones on a daily basis. We urge your support and ask that you add this funding to the budget before this committee.

Penelope Barsch